

Chan Whip: Breaking Through the Barrier¹

Śramana² Zhu Hong³ of Yunqi Monastery

English translation by Haochen Yu and Jeff Shore

¹ 關 Guān, refers to the barrier gate, often built at strategic locations for military purposes. Can be also translated as checkpoint.

² 沙門, a novice monk, a title often used by accomplished masters to demonstrate humility.

³ 蓮池株宏 Lianchi Zhuhong 1535-1615 AD, late Ming dynasty Pure Land master and the eighth Pure Land Patriarch. The Chan and Pure Land schools underwent a fusion (禪淨合流) after the Song dynasty. Zhu Hong practiced and taught in both traditions.

Introduction by the Author

How could Chan have a barrier? For the Truth has neither inside nor outside, not to mention entering or exiting through a barrier. However, when one practices, there is indeed delusion versus awakening. Therefore, Dharma teachers must act as guards at the barrier. They must check its opening and closing, take care of the chains and wheels, and interrogate the passersby thoroughly, so that neither the dubious ones nor the smugglers can steal past and delude others with their lies.

This Chan barrier has never been easy to pass. When I first became a monk, I obtained a book called *Collection of Records on Buddhas and Patriarchs in the Chan Tradition* from the market. In it there were records of ancient masters who described their own difficulties in entering the Way. They also wrote about their lengthy toils and struggles while advancing in their practice, and how they finally broke open and awakened. Reading these texts, I was inspired and filled with admiration, and wanted to follow the steps of these masters. However this book was lost along the way and not to be found again. Therefore I selected texts from records and biographies such as *Five Lanterns Collections*⁴. These were either from monks or laypeople who wrote about their own practice and realization. I trimmed the texts and packed the key parts into this book, and titled it *Chan Whip: Breaking Through the Barrier*. Keep this book at your desk, and take it with you when travelling. Reading through it, you will be inspired and filled with energy, as if whipping yourself on.

Some say this book is for those who have yet to pass the barrier. If one has already passed the barrier long ago, what's the use of a whip? Little do they know, there are barriers beyond barriers after the initial realization. They have but fooled the guard with a rooster's crow so that he opened the first barrier⁵, but are only temporarily spared from the tiger's jaws⁶. Satisfied with their puny realization, they become utterly arrogant. They have not yet exhausted the source and finished the work!! Take this whip in hand, gallop fast, and go all the way! Don't stop till the final hidden barrier has been broken through. Then feast on the completion of practice – it won't be too late!

⁴ 五燈會元, complete Chan records collected in southern Song dynasty around year 1252 AD.

⁵ In ancient China, the barrier gates were opened in the morning when the rooster crows, and closed at night.

⁶ Metaphor for death.

1. Sixin Wuxin⁷, Sanzen⁸

Honorable ones, precious is this life, and precious is the opportunity to hear Buddha Dharma and practice. If you do not liberate yourself in this life, in which life will you do it? You all want to practice Chan? Then you need to let go. Let go of what? Let go of your body and mind⁹, and let go of all delusions from endless kalpas¹⁰. Look under your feet and get to the bottom of **that!** What is that? Get to the bottom of it! Suddenly the mind blossoms and illumines the entire world. Realize this and wield it in your hands. Then you can turn the earth into pure gold and scoop up the great river as sweet yogurt. Wouldn't that be a free and wonderful life? Don't get stuck on this word or that phrase in books, or discuss this Chan and speculate on that Way. The truth of Chan is not in books! Even if you've read the entire Buddhist Canon¹¹ and other classic texts¹² – they are nothing but idle chatter. When death comes, none of it is useful!

Commentary by Zhu Hong: Now that you have read this, don't go around destroying sutras and slandering Dharma. Master Wuxin's teaching is to prevent you from getting stuck on words and not doing the real practice. It is not meant to raise a banner for illiterate fools!

2. Dongshan Fayan¹³, parting words for disciples undertaking pilgrimage¹⁴

You must take the two words "birth-death"¹⁵ and stick them on your forehead, until you see them through. Do not follow the crowd or make up cliques, nor pass the days by deluding yourself. Don't wait till Death¹⁶ comes and asks for his due¹⁷, then complain that I haven't told you so! When it comes to practice, you must be constantly vigilant and make the effort moment by moment. Where does your practice work, and where does it not? Where do you miss, and where do you not miss? There is a type of person, who, the moment he gets on a cushion, falls asleep. Waking up, he indulges in all sorts of discursive thoughts. Getting off

⁷ 死心悟新, 1043-1114 AD, Song dynasty Chan master of Linji lineage.

⁸ 小參, interview between master and student during Chan practice, often done one-on-one. Here it seems that multiple students are invited.

⁹ 四大五蘊, lit. four Elements and five Skandhas. Four Elements 地火水風, physical make-up of the body: solids, heat, fluids and movement. Five Skandhas 色受想行識, five physical and mental constituents of a sentient being: form, sensation, perception, mental formation and consciousness.

¹⁰ 劫, unit of time originated from Hindu mythology. One kalpa can be several million to over a billion years.

¹¹ 大藏經, the collection of all accredited Buddhist texts. The version in the Song dynasty has more than five thousand scrolls.

¹² 諸子百家, refers to the entire canon of other philosophy schools including Confucianism and Taoism.

¹³ 東山法演, (?-1104AD) Song dynasty Linji master.

¹⁴ 行腳, lit. travel on foot. Chan students were often encouraged to travel the realm and train with different masters.

¹⁵ 生死, life-death or birth-death. This is one phrase consisting of two Chinese characters.

¹⁶ 閻王老子, lit. a colloquial reference to King of the Underworld.

¹⁷ 飯錢, payment for a meal.

the cushion, he then talks nonsense. Practicing like this, you won't even begin the Way until Maitreya descends into the world!¹⁸

You must vigorously apply your energy and raise the *huatou*¹⁹, inquire day and night, and wrestle with it. Do not sit in that little “not-a-thing” corner, nor should you sit as if dead on the cushion. If discursive thoughts proliferate, gently put down the *huatou* and take a walk. Then get back on the cushion, open your eyes, clench your fists²⁰, straighten your spine, and pick up the *huatou* as before. This way you will clear up, as if pouring a spoonful of cold water into boiling soup. If you practice like this, you will certainly arrive home soon.

3. Dahui Zonggao²¹, responding to questions

Nowadays there are teachers whose own eye is not open.²² They tell students to practice like dead beasts²³, simply “resting and stopping”, forgetting everything and “silently illuminate”. They also ask the students not to care about anything. All these are diseases, and a waste of effort! One will never get to the end this way. Just put your mind on the *huatou*, and there is no way that you will not realize it. When time and conditions are right, one touch or one tap, with a “Pop!” you will burst awake.

Your own mind and awareness, all the karmic delusions, simply return them to *prajña*²⁴ wisdom. Even if you do not break through in this life, you will not be led by your evil karma at death. And when you are reborn, you will be immersed in *prajña sāmādhi*²⁵ and reap the benefits. This is a sure matter and without doubt.

Just raise the *huatou* moment to moment. When discursive thoughts arise, there is no need to stop them. Just look into the *huatou*; raise it when you walk, raise it when you sit. Raise it again and again. If it is tasteless – that is exactly a good place to be. Don't drop it! Suddenly the mind blossoms and illumines the entire world. You will “see the entire universe on the tip of a hair, and turn the Great Dharma Wheel sitting inside a grain of dust.”²⁶

Commentary: Master Dahui said himself, “Others teach *sāmādhi* first and then *prajña*. I teach *prajña* first, then *sāmādhi*.” Because when the *huatou* doubt block explodes, the so-called “resting and stopping” are there without you wishing for it.

¹⁸ 彌勒下生, Maitreya, the successor of Shakyamuni Buddha, will descend into the world as the next Buddha. However, this is projected to happen in a few billion years.

¹⁹ 話頭, lit. the beginning of a phrase. The ‘cue’ for Chan interrogation, usually the critical point of a koan case.

²⁰ 捏兩拳, this could be an alternative hand position for zazen.

²¹ 大慧宗杲, 1089-1163 AD, (Jap. Daie Sōkō), Song dynasty master. Dharma heir of Yuanwu Keqin (圓悟克勤). Dahui was influential in propagating *Huatou* Chan (Koan Zen).

²² Not awakened.

²³ 獠狽 Ge Jū, mythological beast, with rat-like head and a wolf-like body, it supposedly cries like a pig.

²⁴ 般若, the all encompassing supreme wisdom

²⁵ 三昧, concentrated oneness.

²⁶ 於一毛端。現寶王剎。坐微塵裡。轉大法輪, a phrase from the *Sūraṅgama Sūtra*.

4. Mengshan Deyi²⁷, Teisho²⁸

When I was twenty years old, I first heard of this matter²⁹. For twelve years I studied with seventeen or eighteen different teachers, trying to practice the Way but got nowhere. Afterwards I studied with Master Wanshan³⁰, who instructed me to practice the “**Wu!**” huatou³¹. For twenty-four hours a day I should dedicate myself to the huatou practice without interruption, like a cat trying to catch a mouse or a hen hatching eggs. Until breaking through, I should be like a rat biting through a coffin³² – persistent and without budging. Practicing like this, awakening is certain. Therefore I gave myself fully and practiced diligently for eighteen days and nights. After a tea break, I suddenly understood the meaning of Mahakasyapa’s smile when Buddha picked up a flower³³. I was overwhelmed with joy and asked three or four masters for confirmation, but none gave a word. Some asked me to focus on the practice of Sāgaramudrā Sāmādhi³⁴, and ignore everything else. I followed this instruction.

Two years later in summer, in Chongqing city of Sichuan province, I became very sick with dysentery, and had to release my bowels a hundred times a day. The sickness was grave and I was close to death. Nothing worked, and the Sāgaramudrā Sāmādhi could not be applied. Everything that I allegedly understood and attained was useless. I could neither utter a word from my mouth nor move my body – there was only death. All my past lives and karmic entanglements were flashing through my mind. I was filled with fear, agitation and all kinds of sufferings. Therefore, I gathered my remaining strength, put my affairs in order, and asked others to set up a thick cushion and light a pot of incense. Then I slowly sat up on the cushion and prayed to the Three Jewels³⁵ and Dharma guardians, confessed and repented of all my past sins, and made a vow: “If I die now, I’d like to be reborn with the power of prajñā wisdom and the right view. In the next life, I shall leave home and become ordained as a monk early on. If I survive this illness, I will shave my head and become a monk, in order to quickly realize and help others on the Way.” After making the vow, I raised the “Wu” huatou and turned all awareness back on it. After a while, all my internal organs started churning, which I ignored. After a long time my eyelids became still, and subsequently the body vanished. Only the huatou went on and on without interruption. I sat until evening and the illness was half-gone. I then continued sitting until after midnight. All illness retreated, and my body and mind became light and peaceful.

²⁷ 蒙山德異, 1231-? AD, Yuan dynasty (Mongolian Empire period) master.

²⁸ 開示, instructions to the Sangha in the temple.

²⁹ Chan practice.

³⁰ 皖山正凝, 1192-1275 AD, Song - Yuan dynasty Linji master.

³¹ 無字, the well known Mū koan from Zhaozhou (趙州從諗, Jap. Joshu)

³² A rat bites into the coffin in order to get to the corpse to feed. A metaphor for the persistence required to break through a huatou.

³³ This is the legend for Chan’s origin. One day Shakyamuni Buddha was to give a sermon to the Sangha. Instead of speaking, the Buddha picked up a flower and showed it to the disciples. None understood the meaning, only Mahakasyapa realized it and smiled. According to tradition, this was the first Dharma transmission in Chan.

³⁴ 海印三昧, lit. “ocean-seal sāmādhi”, the supreme meditative state or sāmādhi according to the Avataṃsaka Sūtra.

³⁵ 三寶, the Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Two months later I was ordained as monk in Jiangling³⁶, and went on a pilgrimage one year later. One day while cooking on the road, I realized that the practice must be done continuously, without interruption. I then joined the training period at Huanglong temple³⁷. While sitting, sleepiness came. I garnered up my energy and spirit, and fought it off gently. The same happened a second time. The third time, sleepiness came on overwhelmingly heavily, so I got up and fought it off by prostrating, and returned to the cushion again. By then the sitting was established, and it was a good opportunity to eliminate sleepiness altogether. At first I took short naps with a pillow, and then I used my arm as support while napping. After that I could continue the practice without lying down. After two or three nights, I was tired day and night. The ground under my feet was as if it were floating. Suddenly, all the dark clouds broke up in front of my eyes, and my body was as if freshly bathed. All fatigue and sleepiness were washed away. The doubt block became solid and was continuous without there being any effort. No sound, form, desire or delusion could enter. The practice became clear like snow in a silver bowl or cold autumn air. Then I thought-- though the practice is going well, no one could confirm it. So I left Huanglong for Zhejiang.³⁸ The travel was difficult and exhausting, such that my practice deteriorated. When arriving at Master Guchan³⁹, I made a pledge to not leave until awakening. After more than a month, the practice was restored as before. At that time my body was covered with skin ulcers, but I was not bothered by this. Casting away my life to refine the practice, it was naturally progressing, and I could do the sickness practice like the previous time in Chongqing. Going out to beg, there was just the huatou walking. Passing by benefactors, I could practice in movement. At this point it was like moonlight through clear water; though it is reflected on rippling waves on the rapids, it does not disperse, nor could it be shaken off (even if one wanted to). It was totally alive!

On the sixth day of the third moon⁴⁰, I was sitting and practicing the “Wu” huatou. The head monk came into the Zendo to light the incense, and knocked over the incense box. At this moment, I let out an “Ah!” - the true self was realized, and Zhaozhou was defeated and captured.⁴¹ I then composed a gatha:

*Nothing much at road's end; kicking over the waves – it's all just water.
Sublime as old Zhaozhou, the original face is just like that!*

In autumn that year, I went to Lin'an⁴² to visit several masters like Xueyan, Tuigeng, Shikeng and Xuzhou⁴³. Xuzhou recommended I return to Wanshan, and I complied. Master Wanshan asked me during one-on-one, “‘The radiant light illuminates myriad worlds’, wasn't this

³⁶ 江陵, a city in central China.

³⁷ 黃龍寺, the main temple of the Huanglong sect, a branch of Linji Chan, situated in Jiangxi province of central south China.

³⁸ 浙江, an eastern coastal province of China.

³⁹ 孤蟾如瑩, Caodong (Jap. Sōtō) master, contemporary of Japanese Sōtō Zen founder Dōgen Kigen. Both are Dharma heirs of Tiantong Rujing (天童如淨, Jap. Tendō Nyojō).

⁴⁰ April 14th, 1255 AD

⁴¹ The “Wu” huatou originated from Zhaozhou was broken through.

⁴² 臨安, present-day Hangzhou, the former capital of southern Song dynasty

⁴³ 雪巖, 退耕, 石坑, 虛舟, names of Chan masters.

Zhangzhuo's⁴⁴ words?" Just as I opened my mouth, Wanshan shouted "Ha!" and sent me out. From then on, not a thought arose when walking, sitting, drinking or eating. Six months passed and in the spring of the following year, I returned from a visit in town. While climbing the stone stairway, suddenly all the remaining doubts and obstructions in my chest melted like ice, and no-one was walking on the path. So I visited Master Wanshan again. Master asked again, "*The radiant light illuminates myriad worlds*", wasn't this Zhangzhuo's words?" I immediately flipped over his Chan seat. And several extremely tricky and deceiving koans from the past were resolved one after another.

Honorable ones, beware when practicing Chan! If I did not get ill in Chongqing, my life would have been a waste. It is therefore critically important to meet a Dharma teacher with the right view. This was why the ancients practiced from the morning and begged for guidance in the evening. Diligently and with urgency, they interrogated to resolve **this matter**.

Commentary: Others become discouraged and lazy when ill. This old man practiced even harder with illness, and eventually became an accomplished master. This does not come on its own. When a Chan practitioner gets sick, he should use the sickness to spur and inspire himself.

5. Xueyan Zuqin,⁴⁵ sermon⁴⁶

Time does not wait! And death can come in the blink of an eye! Why not get to the bottom of it while you are still strong and healthy, so that you clarify **this matter** for good? How precious is the opportunity to practice in the great Shenlong Temple on Daze Mountain! Here is where the patriarchs practiced and taught, and the monks' halls are bright and tidy. There is clean food here, and bathwater is kept always warm. If you don't get it done here, you are squandering and giving up on your life; you are content with being a degenerate and helpless fool! If you are indeed lost not knowing how to proceed, why not ask the superiors? During convocations in the Dharma hall every five days, don't you see an oldie getting up and down from the seat with a qū lu⁴⁷ and speaking of this and that? Why not hang his words in your ears, and interrogate again and again: **what** on earth is this about?

This mountain monk⁴⁸ left home when five years old. I was the master's servant and heard about **this matter**⁴⁹ when he was speaking to guests. I was convinced that I could do this, so I learned how to sit zazen. At sixteen I was ordained⁵⁰, and at the age of eighteen I went on pilgrimage. Initially I studied at Master Shuanglin Yuan's⁵¹ sangha and learned from

⁴⁴ Referring to a Tang dynasty koan, where Layman Zhangzhuo attained realisation. The first verse of his awakening gatha was "The radiant light illuminates myriad worlds".

⁴⁵ 雪巖祖欽, 1215-1287 AD, Song-Yuan dynasties Master, teacher of Gaofeng Yuanmiao

⁴⁶ 普說, open lecture to the Sangha and the general public.

⁴⁷ 曲杲, curved backrest

⁴⁸ 山僧, like 沙門, is a title implying inexperience and lack of knowledge. Here it is used to demonstrate humility.

⁴⁹ Chan practice.

⁵⁰ Fully ordained monk

⁵¹ 雙林遠, Song dynasty master, lineage unclear.

everyone. I did not leave the temple day or night. Even when entering monks' quarters or the lavatory, I folded my hands in front of my chest and did not look left or right. My eyes were not looking beyond three feet ahead. In the beginning I worked on the "Wu" huatou. One day, suddenly the thought collapsed into itself and I saw into its origin. Here and now, it was ice cold. It was pure and clear, not moving and unshakable. A day passed as if it was a snap of the fingers, and I could hear neither bells nor drums⁵².

At age nineteen I stayed at the Ling Yin Temple⁵³, where I met a monk from Chu Zhou⁵⁴. He said, "Zuqin, your Chan practice is like dead water, it's useless. You made movement and stillness into two separate things, and broke it into two halves. To practice Chan, you must arouse the Doubt. Minor Doubt – minor awakening; Great Doubt – great awakening." I was convinced by the Chu Zhou monk and changed back to huatou practice. I worked on the huatou of **dry shit stick**⁵⁵. I doubted this and doubted that, inquired into it forward and backwards. However, I was besieged by torpor and discursive thoughts, and could not even get a moment of peace.

I then moved to Jinci Temple⁵⁶, where seven Dharma brothers gathered together to practice. We locked up the quilts and vowed not to lie down. Outside our group, there was a very experienced head monk named Xiu. Every day he sat on the cushion like an iron pillar. When he stood up to walk, he opened his eyes and dropped his arms, also looking like an iron pillar. One could not get close to speak to him. After practicing hard without lying down for two straight years, I was utterly confused and fatigued, and couldn't go on. Therefore I dropped all practice. Two months later, I recovered and was more energetic than ever. I realized that after all, if one wants to complete **this matter**, one cannot go without sleep. Some deep sleep in the middle of the night and then one will be recharged to do the work. One day I met the head monk Xiu in the corridor, and could finally speak to him for the first time. I asked, "I wanted to speak with you last year, but you kept avoiding me, why?" Xiu said, "Real practitioners don't even have time to cut their fingernails, not to mention speaking to you." I asked again, "Currently I couldn't dispense torpor and distractions." Xiu said, "You are not practicing fiercely enough! Put out a thick cushion, straighten your spine. Pour yourself into your huatou. Why bother with torpor and distractions!?" I followed his advice and practiced, and gradually mind and body dissolved. Three days and nights, all was clear, and my eyes were constantly open. On the afternoon of the third day, I was practicing kinhin⁵⁷ and ran into Xiu at the temple gate. Xiu said, "What are you doing here!?" "Practicing the Way", I answered. "You call it practicing the Way, **what** is it?" I couldn't answer and was even more confused. As kinhin finished and I was returning to the Zendo to sit, I ran into Xiu again. He said, "You, open up your eyes wide and watch, **what** on earth is it!?" This was another hint. But I just wanted to get back to the Zendo. Just when I got on the cushion, it suddenly opened up in front of my eyes, and it was as if the Earth collapsed into itself. This

⁵² 鐘鼓, instruments for signalling time in Buddhist temples.

⁵³ 靈隱寺, a temple in present-day Hangzhou.

⁵⁴ 處州, present-day Zhejiang.

⁵⁵ 乾屎橛, stick used to clean the bottom after defecation. This huatou originated from this Gong-An: "Monk asked Yunmen Wenyan (雲門文偃, 864-949AD, founder of Yunmen school) 'What is Buddha?' Yumen answered: 'A dry shit stick!'"

⁵⁶ 淨慈寺, a temple in present-day Hangzhou.

⁵⁷ 如坐行, walking Chan or walking meditation.

moment was nothing that can be achieved by intention, and no word nor metaphor in this world could describe it. So I left my seat and searched for Xiu. The moment he saw me, he said, “Congrats, congrats!” We held hands and walked around at the waterfront⁵⁸ outside the temple gate. Looking up and down, everything in this entire world, all senses, everything that was hated and rejected, all delusions, are flowing out of the luminous nature of the True Self. For over half a month, this profound state continued. Unfortunately I did not encounter a real great Master who could see me through, and therefore it was not wise to stay there. Know that as long as the *view* is not dropped, it will hinder the function of the realization. Every time I fell asleep, **it** broke into two halves. Those koans with theoretical foundation I could get. But those that are like a silver mountain or an iron wall, I couldn’t get at all. Though I’ve since then studied for years as a close disciple under Wuzhun Shifan⁵⁹, not a word from the Master could hit on this obstruction in me, nor could I find a word in sutras or records to remedy this disease. Like this, it was stuck in me for ten years. One day I was walking in front of the Tian Mu Buddha Hall, and I raised my eyes and saw an old cypress tree. This sight hit on **it** and opened it up, and all the profound states I had attained in the past, and that obstruction in my chest, vanished like a puff. It is like entering the bright daylight from a dark room. From then on, I no longer doubt birth, death, Buddha or Patriarchs. And only then I could see where Master Wuzhun once stood, and whack him thirty times with the walking stick!

6. Gaofeng Yuanmiao⁶⁰, Teisho

This matter demands that the practitioners have urgency. Only if you have urgency, the real Doubt will arise. Struggle with it, doubting away without even the intention to doubt, day and night. Sticking the head and tail together, your practice becomes constant and without a crack. Shake it – it does not move; chase it – it does not go away. Bright and clear, you are always in it. This is when the practice is working. Be certain to work with the correct mindset and not separate from it! Do it until you walk not knowing you are walking and sit not knowing you are sitting. Cold, heat, hunger or thirst – you know nothing of that. When you get there, it is not far from home! Hitting it or poking it – it is but a matter of time (until it is broken through). However, now that you have heard this, don’t go and apply your energy single-mindedly to look for it; don’t sit around waiting for it to happen; nor should you just let it be or drop it! Just practice with commitment and strength, and do not stop until full awakening. Know that at this juncture, an army of eighty-four thousand demons⁶¹ is waiting to ambush you at your six sense gates. All the marvels, wonders, good and evil will arise in your mind. If you but deviate a thin hair’s width⁶² from the way, and get hung up, you will be trapped by it⁶³, and be enslaved and ordered around. You will then speak the words and do the deeds of demons. The karma for your awakening is therefore vanquished. The seed of your wisdom shall never germinate. Just don’t arouse a thought and get hung up! Like a

⁵⁸ 柳堤, a dike with willow trees. The waterfront of the West Lake, where Jinci Temple is situated, are guarded by willow trees.

⁵⁹ 無準師範, 1179-1249 AD, Song dynasty master, Xueyan Zuqin is his Dharma heir.

⁶⁰ 高峰原妙 1238-1295 AD, Song-Yuan Dynasties Linji master. Dharma heir of Xueyan Zuqin.

⁶¹ Delusions.

⁶² 毫釐, lit. one-thousandth or one-hundredth of an inch.

⁶³ The delusion.

ghost guarding the corpse, guard it in all directions! Suddenly “**Boom!**”, the doubt block explodes, and it will rock the Heaven and shatter the Earth – I can assure you of that!

I myself left home at fifteen. At twenty I was ordained and entered Jinci Temple. I set myself a three-year death pledge⁶⁴ to learn the way of Chan. Initially I studied with Master Duanqiao Miaolun⁶⁵, who asked me to interrogate “From where did I come at birth, and to where will I go at death?” My mind was split and couldn’t be one. I then went to study with Xueyan Zuqin, who asked me to interrogate the “Wu” huatou and to come for an interview every day. (At first,) Xueyan expected to hear reports of progress every day and noticed that I was quite eloquent and organized in speaking. Then he stopped asking me about my practice. Every time I entered the Sanzen room, he would shout: “**Who** dragged this corpse in here?!” Before even finishing the sentence, he would drive me out with his staff. After some time I moved on to Jingshan Temple⁶⁶. One night, while sleeping I suddenly remembered in my dream: “*Ten thousand dharmas return to One, to where does the One return?*” And thereupon the Great Doubt arose, and there was no east, west, north or south. On the sixth day, I followed the Sangha to recite sutras in the hall. I raised my head and suddenly saw the last verse of Wuzu Fayan’s⁶⁷ gatha:

*One hundred years – thirty-six thousand days – it has been **this fella** all along!*

At that moment the previous huatou on the corpse was broken through, and it was as if my body and spirit were swept away, and I was resurrected from the dead. Oh, how I finally laid down that one hundred and twenty pounds⁶⁸ of burden from my shoulders! I was twenty-four then and was just able to fulfill the three-year death pledge on time.

Afterwards, I was asked by the resident teacher, “Can you be the master of yourself during the day?”⁶⁹ “Yes,” I replied. The master asked again, “How about while dreaming?” “Yes,” I answered. The master asked yet again, “How about while sleeping but not dreaming? **Where** is the master then?” I had no words to answer, and no teaching to draw upon. The master instructed, “From now on, don’t study Buddhism or the Dharma as if you would get to the end of all teachings. Just **eat when hungry and sleep when tired**. Before falling asleep every night, focus your attention on ‘this night while I sleep, **where** is the master?’ In daily life, make a pledge to be a complete and total fool! In this way, you will surely get to the bottom of it.”

Five years later, when I was doing the ‘sleep practice’, a fellow practitioner sharing the room dropped his pillow, and “thud!”⁷⁰. At this moment my doubt block shattered and it was like a fish escaping the net. All the intricate and deceiving koans, the past and present karma were

⁶⁴ 死限, a vow to break through within three years; if not the practitioner shall take his own life.

⁶⁵ 斷橋妙倫. Chan Master, Dharma heir of Wuzhun Shifan

⁶⁶ 徑山寺, a Chan temple built on Jing Mountain

⁶⁷ 東山法演 1024-1104 AD, Song dynasty master, also known as 五祖法演 (Wuzu Fayan), as he was teaching in Wuzu Temple, hence the title. Not to be confused with the fifth Patriarch Wuzu Hongren.

⁶⁸ The body weight.

⁶⁹ 做得主, be in charge, and not deluded by anything.

⁷⁰ The pillows in ancient China were made of hard materials like wood and bamboo. Therefore there was sound when the pillow dropped on the floor.

crystal clear and without hindrance. From then on, the realm was calmed and the world was at peace. One moment of Wuwei⁷¹, every entanglement severed.

Commentary: Master Gaofeng first laid out the critical points for the practice. Practitioners should take note. In his short autobiography, he mentioned “Eat when hungry and sleep when tired.” This is the practice after the initial awakening. Do not misunderstand that.

7. Tieshan Qiong⁷², sermon

When I was thirteen, I first learned about Buddhism. I left home at eighteen and was ordained at twenty-two. First I went to Shishuang⁷³, and remembered that Master Xiangyan⁷⁴ taught to watch the “bright spot on nose tip”⁷⁵, and this way I entered pure and clear *sāmādhi*. After some time, a monk came from Xueyan Zuqin. With him he carried Xueyan’s booklet on zazen. I did not experience what was written in the booklet in my own practice. So I went to Xueyan and practiced according to his instruction – just interrogate the “Wu” huatou. On the fourth night, I was sweating throughout my body and attained great clarity. I then returned to my original temple at Shishuang, shut my mouth and just kept on practicing zazen. Some time later I met Gaofeng Yuanmiao; he said, “This practice must be constant; twenty-four hours a day. So wake up at three in the morning and start inquiring into the huatou. This way it will immediately arise. If you are tired and sleepy, get up and walk around, with every step not separate from the huatou. Opening the meal-sets and reaching for the bowl, picking up the spoon or putting down chopsticks – never separate from it. Practice like this day and night, then it will become continuous without a crack. None who practiced this way has failed to realize.” I followed Gaofeng’s instruction and practiced; it indeed became continuous and without a crack. One day, Xueyan visited the temple and gave a Teisho. He said, “Brothers, when you tend to doze off on the cushion, get up and walk around. Wash your face and mouth with cold water, and open your eyes. Get back on the cushion, straighten up your spine like a stone cliff of ten thousand feet. Single-mindedly inquire into the huatou. Practicing like this, you will awaken within seven days! This is what I did forty years ago.” I followed Xueyan’s instruction, and immediately noticed that the practice was extraordinary. On the second day, I couldn’t close my eyes even if I wanted. On the third day, it was like moving in empty space. On day four, I forgot everything of this world. At night I stood a while leaning on the handrail outside the Zendo – all was clear and without a thing. Checking on the huatou – it was not lost. I then turned around to get back on the cushion. Suddenly, it was like my skull cracked open and I was raised from a dark tunnel ten thousand feet deep. I was beside myself with joy, and went to Xueyan for confirmation. Xueyan said, “Not there yet! Go back to do more practice!” I asked for an explanation. Xueyan said, “In order to do Buddha and Patriarchs’ sublime work, you still need a hammer blow to the back of your head!” I thought, “How come I need a hammer blow?” and did not

⁷¹ 無為, uncontrived or unconditioned.

⁷² 鐵山瓊, Chan master, birth and death year unknown

⁷³ Name of a temple in central China.

⁷⁴ 祥菴主, another Chan master of the Yunmen school

⁷⁵ 觀鼻端白, a practice recorded originally in the *Sūtraṅgama Sūtra*. During zazen, one uses the limited eyesight to watch the light reflected on the nostrils.

believe Xueyan's words. But the doubt remained and could not be resolved, so I kept on practicing zazen daily. About six months later, I had a headache and was brewing medicine for myself. The smell was quite pungent and piecing in my nose. I was reminded of a huatou about Nezha⁷⁶ from a monk called Wù, to whom I couldn't respond. This time the doubt block was suddenly broken.

Later on I went to study with Mengshan Deyi. Master Mengshan asked me, "When practicing Zen, where will your practice be complete?" I had no clue. Mengshan asked me to work on my sāmādhi practice, in order to purify habits and eliminate delusional patterns. Everytime I entered the Sanzen room, he just said, "Still lacking!" One day, in the late afternoon, I sat till the end of the hour. Riding the power of sāmādhi, I reached profound depth and sublimity. Getting out of the deep sāmādhi, I went to Mengshan to discuss this experience. Mengshan asked, "What is your **original face**?!" I was just about to respond, but Mengshan shut the door while sending me out. Starting from that, the practice made new progress on a daily basis. On reflection, I left Xueyan too early, and did not refine my practice with him. Fortunately I was able to meet a real master like Mengshan, so that I could get where I was. I realized that if the practice was tight and dynamic, there was a place in which to go deeper at every moment. With every step in, one layer peels off. One day I saw a verse of the Third Patriarch's Xin Xin Ming⁷⁷ written on the wall:

Return to the root to attain the essence, tracing the illumination the source vanishes.

– another layer peeled off.

Mengshan said, "This matter is like peeling a pearl. The more it is peeled, the brighter and purer is the pearl. Just do the peeling, and it's better than several lifetimes of practice." But when I asked for confirmation, the answer was still "Still lacking!" One day in sāmādhi, my mind pondered the word "lacking". Suddenly mind and body emptied out, down to the bones and marrow. Like the sun breaking up the clouds after heavy snow. I couldn't resist my laughter, and jumped up from my seat. I went into the abbot's chamber, grabbed Mengshan and asked, "I lack **what**!?" Mengshan slapped me three times, and I prostrated three times. He said, "Tieshan! You were stuck on **this** for so many years. Today it is finally done!"

The moment you lose your huatou, you are a dead man! Whatever states or experiences there are, just stick to the huatou and persist. Check the huatou at all times, whether moving or staying still, progressing or not progressing. Particularly, do not forget the huatou in sāmādhi; without the huatou your meditation will become distorted. Do not wait for awakening; do not try to speculate or understand from words; nor should you dwell on a little insight as if you have completed the matter. Just be a completely dumb fool and strive on, till

⁷⁶ 哪吒, Nezha, child-like mythical prince, also a Buddhist guardian deity. The legend was that Nezha slew the Dragon Prince out of wrath, and the Dragon King threatened to avenge his son by drowning his entire family. Nezha committed suicide to save the family from death, and he mutilated himself as a way to repay his debts to his parents. The huatou associated with Nezha was: "Prince Nezha shaved off his own flesh to repay the mother and cut off his own bones to repay his father, **what** is his real body?"

⁷⁷ 信心銘, A long poem written by the Third Chan Patriarch Sengcan (?-606 AD). It covered the key aspects of the original Chan practice.

the Buddha Dharma becomes one with worldly phenomena, and you act and live just as if it is totally ordinary – the only difference is **where** you take your step from. The ancients said: *“The Great Way could never be spoken of. The moment you try to speak of the profound mystery, you are separated from it by a heavenly chasm⁷⁸. You must simply forget all knowledge and beliefs. Only then can you eat when hungry and sleep when tired.”*

8. Tianru Weize⁷⁹, sermon

Being born, not knowing where you came from – great is the matter of birth! Dying, not knowing where you go – great is the matter of death! When your last day⁸⁰ comes, you panic and do not know what to do. Even worse, the path in front of you is foggy and uncertain, and you reap the karmic retribution. Therefore **this** is the most important matter. **This** is the karmic retribution of birth and death. And if speaking of the root of birth and death, it is just here and now, as you chase after your wavering mind and become utterly deluded and perverse. Thanks to Buddha and Patriarchs who, with great compassion, taught some how to practice Chan, and others how to practice Nianfo⁸¹. This way you can sweep away delusions and see your original face, thus becoming a great free man not bound by anything! And yet nowadays few benefit from this. This is because three kinds of sickness are rampant. One, you do not seek a real Dharma teacher for his guidance. Two, you don't work on the great matter of birth and death. Drifting and lazy, you fall into a hole of idleness. Third, you cannot see through and let go of all worldly fame and gain. You cannot cut off or shake free of your delusional karma and evil habits. The moment conditions trigger it, you lose yourself in the sea of karmic retribution and drift off in all directions.

If you are a real practitioner of the Way, how can you allow that to happen? You should have faith in the teaching of the Patriarchs. If delusive thoughts proliferate, what to do? Just take up a huatou, as if it is an iron broom. The harder you sweep, the more delusions arise. The more delusions arise, the harder you sweep. Even if you cannot sweep any more, throw your life into it and keep sweeping! Suddenly you sweep open the **great emptiness**, all the ten thousand different paths are opened as one. Practitioners, strive so that you complete the matter in this life, otherwise you will suffer endlessly in countless Kalpas.

Some have questions on the difference between Chan and Nianfo practices. A Chan practitioner strives to see his true nature, while a Pure Land practitioner awakens to the reality that his true nature **is** the Amitabha Pure Land. How can these be different? The Śūraṅgama Sūtra says, “If you remember Buddha by reciting the name here and now, you will see Buddha.” Since it is called ‘seeing the Buddha here and now’, how is it different from practicing Chan and realizing the Way?

⁷⁸ 天淵. Probably referring to the Milky Way.

⁷⁹ 天如惟則, 1284 - 1356 AD, Yuan dynasty Linji master, who was one of the influential Chan masters that introduced Pure Land teaching in Chan school.

⁸⁰ 臘月三十, the 30th day of the twelfth month according to the traditional Chinese calendar, which is the last day of the year. Here used as a metaphor for the day of death.

⁸¹ 念佛, Jap. Nembutsu. Recitation of the name of Amitabha Buddha, the core practice in Pure Land Buddhism.

Commentary: Tianru said while answering a question, “Just take the Buddha’s name Amitabha as a huatou, interrogating it twenty-four hours a day until not a thought arises. You will go beyond all stages of meditation, and directly enter the realm of buddhahood!”

9. Wuwen Sicong⁸², sermon

When I first studied with Master Dufeng⁸³, he asked me to interrogate “Not mind, not Buddha, not a thing – **what** is it?” Afterwards, I practiced with six Dharma friends including Yunfeng and Yueshan, and we vowed to support each other till the end. Then I studied with Wuneng to the west of Huai River, where I practiced the “Wu” huatou. Afterwards, I went to Changlu and refined my practice with a group of Dharma friends.

One day I met my Dharma elder brother Jing. He asked, “What have you attained these past six, seven years?” I replied, “Every day not-a-thing in mind.” Jing said, “This ‘not-a-thing’, where does it come from?” I wasn’t sure if I knew the answer or not, so I did not dare to respond. Jing saw that I was lost, and said, “You maintain the practice in your *sāmādhi*, but lose it when you move.” He was spot on, and I was shocked, and asked, “How can I finally clarify this Great Matter?” Jing said, “Haven’t you heard what old man Chuan⁸⁴ said, ‘If you want to know this, **see the Northern Star while facing south**?’” He said this then got up and left. I was shocked by this question and walked without knowing that I was walking, and sat without knowing that I was sitting. For five to seven days, I did not work on the “Wu” huatou, but just wanted to get “If you want to know this, see the Northern Star while facing south!” At a certain point I found myself in the quarters of janitor monks⁸⁵, sitting together with the monks there on a piece of wood. I simply could not get rid of the Doubt. This lasted about the time for a meal, then suddenly everything emptied out and cleared up as the doubt block burst as if my skin peeled off. I could see no one and nothing in front of me as if all was empty. I came to myself after a long time and was drenched in sweat. Then I knew how to see the Northern Star facing south, and presented a gatha to Jing, without any hindrance. However, the path of practice still goes beyond that, and I wasn’t free yet. I then went into Xianyan Mountain to spend the summer. My practice was disturbed by mosquito bites on my hands such that I could not settle. Then I remembered that the ancients threw away their bodies for Dharma, what are mosquito bites in comparison? So I dropped that concern completely, clenched my jaw and my fists, and threw myself into the “Wu” huatou. I endured long the disturbance of mosquitoes, while the mind and body returned to stillness like a house without walls. The body was as if empty, and there was not a thing to hold on to. The sitting started in the morning, and I came out of meditation after six hours. This convinced me that the Buddha Dharma does not fail the practitioner, it is just a matter of effort. Though my view and understanding were clear, subtle and hidden delusions still remained. I then entered the mountain in Guangzhou⁸⁶ to practice six years of *sāmādhi*, then another six

⁸² 無聞思聰, Ming dynasty master. Lineage, birth and death years are unknown.

⁸³ 獨翁和尚, Ming dynasty master. No record of him was found.

⁸⁴ 治父道川, Zhifu Daoquan, Song dynasty Linji master. Lineage, birth and death years are unknown.

⁸⁵ 淨頭, jing tou, monks responsible to clean the toilets.

⁸⁶ 光州, in present-day Henan province, central China.

years on Lu'an Mountain, followed by three more years back in Guangzhou. Only then was I fully liberated.

Commentary: How diligent were the ancients! Only if practiced in such a long and sustained way, will you see the results. Nowadays some people use their cleverness and intellect to try to speculate for a moment, and then boast about having attained “sudden awakening” – what fools!

10. Master Bo Re⁸⁷, Teisho

Brothers, if you have practiced for three, or five years and have not found the entrance, you may be tempted to throw away the old huatou. Little do you know that you've given up halfway. What a waste of all the previous efforts! If you are a man of determination, see that the temple has everything set up for the practice⁸⁸, and vow not to leave for three years. I assure you that you will see the benefits.

There is a type of person who just starts practicing and his mind becomes clear. The moment he gets to some state, he starts to pen his four liners⁸⁹ and demonstrates that he has achieved great realization. His mouth and tongue are swift, but his life is squandered. When he stops breathing⁹⁰, how will he maintain his realization? Dharma friends, if you'd like to be liberated, know that Chan inquiry must be done diligently, and awakening must be thorough.

Some practice the huatou so that it is continuous without a crack until the sensation of the body disappears. This is called “person forgotten, but the path remains”. Suddenly he remembers his body as if falling off a ten-thousand-foot cliff in a dream. He then panics and scrambles to save himself, and thus becomes mad and deranged. If you get to this state, just stick tightly to the huatou. Suddenly everything, including the huatou, disappears. This is called “person and path both forgotten”. And as if “*a bean popping in cold ash*”, you know why “*Mr. Zhang drinks liquor, yet Mr. Li gets drunk.*” Only then are you fit to come to me and taste my staff⁹¹! Why is it so? You must break through barrier after barrier set by generations of Patriarchs, visit many Dharma teachers, know all aspects⁹² of the teaching, and maintain and refine your practice in a hidden place. Only when auspicious Dharma guardians appear⁹³, then you may come out and spread the practice and teachings, and save myriads of sentient beings.

⁸⁷ 般若和尚, a monk named after prajña. Lineage and origin are unknown.

⁸⁸ 柴乾水便僧堂溫暖, lit. firewood is dry, water is conveniently (available) and the monks' hall is warm.

⁸⁹ An awakening gatha often consists of four lines.

⁹⁰ 三寸氣消, lit. three inches of exhalation vanishes, death comes.

⁹¹ Receive a beating.

⁹² 淺深, lit. shallows and depths.

⁹³ 龍天推出, lit. dragons and gods recommend, meaning when the condition is right.

11. Gumei Zhengyou⁹⁴, Teisho

You must have great courage and make a firm vow. All that you have realized and learned, all the Dharma teachings, texts, poems and explanations of meditation – sweep them all into the great ocean and do not hold on to any! Eighty-four thousand subtle delusions cut them off with one sitting! Take up the huatou coming out of your own genuine doubt and interrogate it thoroughly. Interrogate the huatou with your whole body and mind, until everything becomes one so that you can get to the bottom of **that**.

Do not stop until you fully awaken. Do not look for hints in koans nor speculate on sutras. Just do it until the doubt block explodes with a “Bang!” so that you truly arrive home. If your huatou does not lock-in, just raise it intentionally three times, and you will feel that it has power. If you get tired and the mind starts to get restless, get up from the seat, walk around and then get back on the cushion. Take up your original huatou again and interrogate as before.

There are those who doze off the moment they get on the cushion. Opening their eyes, they drift into dreaming and delusions. Getting up from their seats, they get together in small groups, whispering to each other and speaking of this and that. They remember a bellyful of Chan records and sutras in order to show off their “eloquence” and “brilliance”. If one practices like this, the moment your last day comes, everything will be in vain!

12. Puyan Duan'an⁹⁵, Teisho

“*Ten thousand dharmas return to One, to where does the One return?*” Do not sit guarding emptiness and stillness, and fail to interrogate the huatou. Do not sit there without the doubt sensation, and simply recite the huatou. If there are torpor and discursive thoughts, do not fight it with intention. Simply raise the huatou, focus your body and mind and get locked-in. If this does not work, get up and do kinhin⁹⁶, so that torpor and thoughts are gone. Then get back on the cushion and continue. Suddenly the huatou is there without you raising it, and the doubt sensation goes on without you wanting it. Walk, not knowing you are walking, and sit, not knowing you are sitting. Only single-minded interrogation goes on and on, and it is crystal clear. This is where delusions end; where the self ends.

Even if you get here, it's not done yet. You need to spur yourself onward, and see “*where does the One return?*” Raise the huatou from here, where there are no longer methods or stages. There is only the doubt block. Raise it, as if it is forgotten, and shine the light of awareness back until it is exhausted. This is called “exhausting the Dharma”. This is how you get to the no-mind state.

Could this be final? The ancients said: “*Do not say that no-mind is the Way, no-mind is still separated from it by a deep barrier.*” Suddenly no-mind meets a sound or a form. Touched

⁹⁴ 古梅正友, 1285-1352 AD, Yuan dynasty Chan master.

⁹⁵ 普巖斷岸, unrecorded master.

⁹⁶ 經行, walking meditation.

and poked, “**Ha!**” you give out a laugh. Flip over that, and it’s all good. Then you say “a cow in Huaizhou⁹⁷ eats grain, a horse in Yizhou⁹⁸ gets a bellyful.”

13. Guzhuo Changjun⁹⁹, Teisho

Venerables, why not invoke great energy and determination, and make a sincere vow to the Three Jewels?¹⁰⁰ Until the Great Matter of birth and death is resolved, and the barriers of the Patriarchs are all broken through, vow not to leave the temple. Hang up your bowl bag high at your seat¹⁰¹ and sit upright like a thousand-foot stone cliff. Until the end of this life, you will practice until you get to the bottom of it. If you have this mindset, you will surely succeed! However, if your vow is not sincere, and your determination is not strong, and you spend a winter here, and a summer there, you make some progress today and fall backward tomorrow, never to find a real entrance. Then you go around and say that prajña wisdom¹⁰² does not work, and you seek outside for solutions. You remember a bellyful of texts and copy an entire canon of them, and thus become a full bottle of rotten lao zao¹⁰³. Those who smell it become nauseated and retch. Practicing like this, even until Maitreya descends, you have not even started. What pains!

14. Chushi Fanqi¹⁰⁴, Teisho

Brothers, you open your mouth and say, “I am a Chan monk.” Then I ask you “What is Chan?” and you look left and right, flatten your mouths, whine, and complain. You are living off the heritage of Buddha and the Patriarchs without doing your duty. You go around and argue about texts and phrases, and spew out buzzwords loudly with neither fear nor shame. If you have time to do that, why not go back to your cushion and figure out “*what is your original face before you are born*” by humbly following the example of the Sixth Patriarch?¹⁰⁵ Hoping to get blessings, and trying to remove your karmic hindrance by repentance – these are far off the Path.

Focusing the mind and restraining your thoughts, you try to let everything become empty. The moment a thought arises, you suppress it by force. Practicing like this, you will fall into

⁹⁷ 懷州, present-day Henan, central China.

⁹⁸ 益州, present-day Sichuan, southwestern China. Approximately 1500 km west of Henan.

⁹⁹ 古拙昌俊, ? -1407 AD, early Ming dynasty master.

¹⁰⁰ The Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

¹⁰¹ 長連床, (Chang Lian Chuang), the elevated seating platform in a Zendo, where a monk is allocated a seat (單位) in the hall. In ancient times he also hangs the bag containing his bowel on the wall, which is called Gua Dan (掛單). Nowadays, Gua Dan is used to refer to a short-term stay in a temple by a monk or layperson.

¹⁰² Chan practice

¹⁰³ 醪糟, fermented glutinous rice.

¹⁰⁴ 楚石梵琦, 1296-1370 AD, Yuan-Ming dynasties master.

¹⁰⁵ 冷地裏學客春, lit. learn to grind rice in an isolated place. This refers to the legend of the Sixth Chan Patriarch Huineng (惠能, 638-713 AD), who spent the first eight months at the Fifth Patriarch Hongren’s temple working as a servant in the kitchen. He was instructed to grind rice and cut firewood. Humble as these activities are, it is real Chan practice assigned to Huineng by his master.

dead emptiness, and become a dead heretic whose soul is lost and cannot be retrieved. Yet others identify with the entity that gets angry or happy, and is able to see and hear. Others believe that if they clearly realize the one that is angry or happy, and sees and hears, they have completed the Great Matter. Let me ask you, when death comes and you are burned into ashes, that thing that gets angry or happy and sees and hears – **where** does it go now? If you practice like that, it is mistaking mercury for silver. It's not real silver and melts the moment it gets warm.

Once I asked, "What do you normally practice?" A monk answered, "Some teacher asked me to interrogate the koan '*Ten thousand dharmas return to One, to where does the One return?*' He told me to just understand the huatou in a certain way. Now I know this was wrong. Could Master please assign me another huatou?" I said, "The koans of ancients are not wrong, and your own eye is clear, but it is deluded because of your former teacher." He kept on asking for a new huatou, so I said, "Go and interrogate '*Does a dog have Buddha-nature? – Wu!*', and suddenly the lacquer bucket bursts¹⁰⁶, then come and taste the staff in the hand of this mountain monk!"

Commentary: From Tianru Weize down, these are old masters of the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Great masters like Chushi Fanqi are those who cross the two dynasties. He was the fifth generation Dharma heir of Dahui Zonggao. His view was bright as the sun and clear as the moon. His eloquence was fierce as thunder and swift like the wind. He pointed directly to the root, and shook off the branches and leaves – a worthy successor of Dahui indeed!

15. Chan Master Puji of Korea, answering the letter of Chancellor Li¹⁰⁷

Since you have practiced the "Wu" huatou, there's no need to change to another one. Also, since you have practiced "Wu", the practice has some maturity to it. Don't modify it and don't switch the huatou. Twenty-four hours a day, whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down, just raise the huatou. Don't ask when, and if, you will awaken, and don't care if it is boring or not. Just interrogate until the mind cannot reach it, and not a thought arises – this is the place where Buddhas and Patriarchs lay down their lives.

Commentary: This paragraph was recorded in the fifteenth year of the Wanli period¹⁰⁸, when General Xu led the expedition force to Korea. Such words were not heard before in China. Therefore I recorded the essence of it. Consider well.

¹⁰⁶ The doubt block was broken.

¹⁰⁷ Origin of the text is unknown. But it should be between 1300 and 1392 within the Goryeo (高麗) dynasty of Korea.

¹⁰⁸ 1597 AD.

16. Chushan Shaoqi¹⁰⁹, Teisho at the completion ceremony of a training period

Venerables! In these ninety days¹¹⁰, have you realized it? If not, this winter has been wasted! If you are a real practitioner of the Way, make the whole universe your training period. Whether long or short, a hundred days or a thousand days, starting or finishing¹¹¹ a period, make the moment you take up a huatou as the beginning. If you don't realize it in a year, then you interrogate for another year. Not realized it in ten years? You interrogate for another ten years. Not realized it in twenty years? You do it for twenty years. Even if you don't realize it until the end of your life, your determination is unshaken. Only if you get to the genuine end of it all can you say that you have completed the interrogation and finished the training period.

If you cannot “get the essence before a word is uttered”, just take “*Namo Amitabha Buddha*”¹¹² and hold it in your chest, and interrogate quietly. Whip up your doubt sensation, and ask, “The one reciting Buddha's name, **who** is it?” Do this, moment after moment, continuously and without interruption, until the river runs dry and the mountain becomes bare¹¹³. This is naturally the place where you flip over, and with an “Ah!”, you enter the Truth.

Commentary: Enter the training period when you pick up the huatou; leave the training period when you attain genuine and complete realization-- bear that in mind.

17. Dufeng Benshan¹¹⁴, Teisho

If you want to resolve the Great Matter of birth and death, you must first have great trust in the practice and make a great vow: until you break through your genuine koan, and see the **original face** before you are born, vow not to let go of the huatou. You must vow not to separate yourself from true Dharma friends and go and chase after fame and gain. If you go against this vow, you shall fall into the evil realms (of beasts, hungry ghosts and hell). Make this great vow in order to protect your motivation (to practice), such that you are worthy of taking up a huatou.

Some work with the “Wu” huatou, where the critical point is to clarify “Why does a dog have **no** Buddha-nature?” Others work on the “Ten thousand dharmas return to One”; and the critical point here is “to **where** does the One return?” Yet others interrogate with the Nianfo practice, where the critical point is “The one reciting Buddha's name, **who** is it?” “Turning the light to illuminate the source”, so that you plunge deep into the doubt sensation. If raising the huatou itself does not provide power, recite the entire case. (For example, instead of just interrogating “Wu”, use the entire case “Does a dog have Buddha-nature – Wu!”) so that the beginning and end of a case are connected and one gets a grip to become locked-in. This

¹⁰⁹ 楚山紹琦, 1404-1473 AD, Ming dynasty Linji master.

¹¹⁰ Traditional annual Chan training periods are three months in summer and three months in winter.

¹¹¹ 結制解制, lit. establishing disciplines (at the beginning) and relaxing disciplines (at the end) of a training period.

¹¹² The name of Buddha Amitabha recited in the Nianfo/Nembutsu practice.

¹¹³ 山窮水盡, Shan Qiong Shui Jin. Metaphor for the end of self.

¹¹⁴ 毒峯本善, 1419-1482 AD, Ming dynasty master

way it arouses doubt until it becomes continuous and without interruption. When you get to this point, continue to practice eagerly. And suddenly, without intention, you flip over with one step and make a somersault in midair – only then you can come again and taste the staff!

18. Konggu Jinglong¹¹⁵, Teisho

Do not recite the huatou like a fool, nor should you speculate about things and compare. You should practice with fury at all times until you break through **this matter**. Suddenly, hanging on the precipice, your hands let go and you flip over with a somersault. You see everything as one and all is clear. When you get here, don't stop! You still lack a hammer-blow to the back of your head. Here it is extremely hard to break through – just continue the interrogation as before.

Awakening without Chan interrogation, this may have been possible in the ancient past. Since then, none have realized without diligent practice.

Master Youtan¹¹⁶ instructed to interrogate “The one reciting Buddha's name, **who** is it?” You don't need to use this method now. Just recite Buddha's name normally¹¹⁷, until it becomes continuous, without interruption or intention. Suddenly it gets touched and poked by an external event, you flip over with one phrase, and know that peaceful, bright Pure Land is not separate from here, and Amitabha Buddha has never been outside of your mind.

Commentary: “*You should practice with fury at all times until you break through this matter.*” This is a wonderful sentence. It says it all for the huatou practice.

19. Tianqi Benrui¹¹⁸, Teisho

You all should make a great vow, starting today. Every day and night, you shall raise your own huatou and see what the heck is it about. You must break through thoroughly. Practicing deeply for days or even years, just don't bother with torpor or distraction – the problems will subside on their own. Pure and without defilement, not a thought arises. Suddenly it is realized as if waking from a dream. Looking back, the original Truth that is empty has been there all along, and all the mysteries of the entire world are laid bare. Living in this land of great light, your life has been worthwhile. Passing through this Dharma gate, your monkhood has not been in vain. Then you live following the karmic stream-- how carefree and how joyful!

¹¹⁵ 空谷景隆, 1393-1470 AD, Ming dynasty master.

¹¹⁶ 優曇, unrecorded master.

¹¹⁷ Referring to the Nianfo practice, where one recites, “Namo Amitabha Buddha”.

¹¹⁸ 天奇本瑞, ?-1508 AD, Ming dynasty Linji master.

Reciting Buddha's name all day long, little do you know that Buddha is reciting all along! If you don't know that, just watch the one reciting – **who** is it? Then your eye becomes fixed and your mind becomes settled; you must get to the bottom of that!

Commentary: Both Dufeng and Tianqi taught huatou interrogation during the Nianfo practice. Why does Konggu say that it is not necessary? This is because they are facing different circumstances. The methods are adapted according to the circumstance in order to cause no hindrance.

20. Guyin Jinqin¹¹⁹, Teisho

All the good and evil states that arise during zazen, just sit through. Don't speculate and let your mind go off track. Just sit still with your eyes closed, and do not let your mind get hung up. If your mind is led astray by conditions, or you are half dreaming and half awake, or you are stuck in a quiet meditative state – this is because you seek pleasurable states. If one wants to practice properly, sleep when sleep is called for, and get up the moment you wake up. Shake up your spirit and rub your eyes. Bite your teeth and clench your fist. Watch where the huatou is right now. Do not follow your torpor, and do not get caught up by even a single thread of conditions!

Whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, recite Amitabha's name without interruption. Have deep faith in the karmic law and recite until it is going on without intention. If you can do this with every thought that arises, the practice becomes continuous and without a crack. In this one moment now, you shall see that the Amitabha you recite is one with you.

¹¹⁹ 古音淨琴, late Ming dynasty master, birth and death year unrecorded. He was active in the early 16th century.

禪關策進選

雲棲寺沙門株宏輯

[1097c15] 禪曷為有關乎。道無內外。無出入。而人之為道。也有迷悟。於是大知識關吏。不得不時其啟閉。慎其鎖鑰。嚴其勘覈。俾異言服私越度者。無所售其奸。而關之不易透。亦已久矣。予初出家。得一帙於坊間。曰禪門佛祖綱目。中所載多古尊宿。自敘其參學時始之難入。中之做工夫。經歷勞苦次第。與終之廓爾神悟。心愛之慕之願學焉。既而此書於他處更不再見。乃續閱五燈諸語錄雜傳。無論縑素。但實參實悟者併入前帙。刪繁取要彙之成編。易名曰禪關策進。居則置案。行則携囊。一覽之則心志激勵。神采煥發。勢自鞭逼前進。或曰。是編也為未過關者設也。已過關者長往矣。將安用之。雖然關之外有重關焉。託偽於雞聲。暫離於虎口。得少為足。是為增上慢人。水未窮。山未盡。警策在手。疾驅而長馳。破最後之幽關。徐而作罷參齋。未晚也。

1. 黃龍死心新禪師小參

[1098c04] 諸上座。人身難得。佛法難聞。此身不向今生度。更向何生度此身。爾諸人要參禪麼。須是放下著。放下箇甚麼。放下箇四大五蘊。放下無量劫來許多業識。向自己脚跟下。推窮看。是甚麼道理。推來推去。忽然心華發明。照十方刹。可謂得之於心。應之於手。便能變大地作黃金。攪長河為酥酪。豈不暢快平生。莫只管冊子上念言念語。討禪討道。禪道不在冊子上。縱饒念得一大藏教諸子百家。也只是閒言語。臨死之時。總用不著。

[1098c14] 評曰。不可見恁麼說。便謗經毀法。蓋此語為著文字。而不修行者戒也。非為不識一丁者。立赤幟也。

2. 東山演禪師送徒行脚

[1098c18] 須將生死二字。貼在額頭上討取箇分曉。如只隨群作隊。打哄過日。他時閻老子打算飯錢。莫道我不曾說與爾來。若是做工夫。須要時時檢點刻刻提撕。那裏是得力處。那裏是不得力處。那裏是打失處。那裏是不打失處。有一等。纔上蒲團。便打瞌睡。及至醒來。胡思亂想。纔下蒲團。便說雜話。如此辦道。直至彌勒下生。也未得入手。須是猛著精彩提箇話頭。晝參夜參。與他廝捱。不可坐在無事甲裏。又不可蒲團上死坐。若雜念轉鬪轉多。輕輕放下。下地走一遭。再上蒲團。開兩眼。捏兩拳。豎起脊梁。依前提起話頭。便覺清涼。如一鍋沸湯攪一杓冷水相似。如此做工夫。定有到家時節。

3. 徑山大慧杲禪師答問

[1099a13] 今時有自眼不明。只管教人死獍狽地休去歇去。又教人隨緣管。帶忘情默照。又教人是事莫管。如是諸病。枉用工夫。無有了期。但只存心一處。無有不得者。時節因緣到來。自然觸著磕著。噴地醒去。把自家心識。緣世間塵勞的。回來底在般若上。縱今生打未徹。臨命終時。定不為惡業所牽。來生出頭。定在般若中。見成受用。此是決定的事。無可疑者。但自時時提撕。妄念起時。亦不必將心止遏。只看箇話頭。行也提撕。坐也提撕。提撕來。提撕去。沒滋味。那時便是好處。不得放捨。忽然心華發明。照十方刹。便能於一毛端。現寶王刹。坐微塵裏。轉大法輪。

[1099a26] 評曰。師自云。他人先定而後慧。某甲先慧而後定。蓋話頭疑破。所謂休去歇去者。不期然而然矣。

4. 蒙山異禪師示眾

[1099b01] 某年二十。知有此事。至三十二。請益十七八員長老。問他做工夫。都無端的。後參皖山長老。教看無字。十二時中。要惺惺如猫捕鼠。如鷄抱卵。無令間斷。未透徹時。如鼠咬棺材。不可移易。如此做去。定有發明時節。於是晝夜孜孜體究經十八日。吃茶次。忽會得世尊拈花迦葉微咲。不勝歡喜。求決三四員長老。俱無一語。或教只以海印三昧一印印定。餘俱莫管。便信此說。過了二載。景定五年六月。在四川重慶府。患痢晝夜百次。危劇瀕死。全不得力。海印三昧。也用不得。從前解會的。也用不得。有口說不得。有身動不得。有死而已。業緣境界。俱時現前。怕怖悼惶。眾苦交逼。遂

強作主宰。分付後事。高著蒲團。裝一爐香。徐起坐定默禱三寶龍天。悔過從前諸不善業。若大限當盡。願承般若力。正念托生。早早出家。若得病愈。便棄俗為僧。早得悟明。廣度後學。作此願已。提箇無字。回光自看。未久之間。臟腑三四回動。只不管他。良久眼皮不動。又良久。不見有身。只話頭不絕。至晚方起。病退一半。復坐至三更四點。諸病盡退。身心輕安。八月至江陵落髮。一年起單行脚。途中炊飯。悟得工夫須是一氣做成。不可斷續。到黃龍歸堂。第一次睡魔來時。就座抖擻精神。輕輕敵退。第二次亦如是退。第三次睡魔重時。下地禮拜消遣。再上蒲團。規式已定。便趁此時。打併睡魔。初用枕短睡。後用臂。後不放倒身。過二三夜。日夜皆倦。脚下浮逼逼地。忽然眼前如黑雲開。自身如新浴出。一般清快。心下疑團愈盛。不著用力。綿綿現前。一切聲色五欲八風。皆入不得。清淨如銀盆盛雪相似。如秋空氣肅相似。却思工夫雖好。無可決擇。起單入浙。在路辛苦。工夫退失。至承天孤蟾和尚處歸堂。自誓未得悟明。斷不起單。月餘工夫復舊。其時遍身生瘡亦不顧。捨命趁逐工夫。自然得力。又做得病中工夫。因赴齋出門。提話頭而行不覺。行過齋家。又做得動中工。夫到此却似透水月華。急灘之上亂波之中。觸不散。蕩不失。活鱗鱗地。三月初六日坐中。正舉無字。首座入堂燒香。打香盒作聲。忽然[口@力]地一聲。識得自己。捉敗趙州。遂頌云。沒興路頭窮。踏翻波是水。超群老趙州。面目只如此。秋間臨安見雪巖。退耕。石坑。虛舟。諸大老。舟勸往皖山。山問。光明寂照遍河沙。豈不是張拙秀才語。某開口。山便喝出。自此行坐飲食皆無意思。經六箇月。次年春。因出城回。上石梯子。忽然胸次疑礙冰釋。不知有身在路上行。乃見山。山又問前語。某便掀倒禪床。却將從前數則。極誦訛公案。一一曉了。諸仁者。參禪大須仔細。山僧若不得重慶一病。幾乎虛度。要緊在遇正知見人。所以古人朝參暮請。決擇身心。孜孜切切。究明此事。

[1099c24] 評曰。他人因病而退惰。此老帶病精修。終成大器。豈徒然哉。禪人病中。當以是痛自勉勵。

5. 袁州雪巖欽禪師普說

[1100a14] 時不待人。轉眼便是來生。何不趁身強力健。打教徹去。討教明白去。何幸又得在此名山大澤神龍世界祖師法窟僧堂明淨。粥飯清潔。湯火穩便。若不向這裏打教徹討教明白去。是爾自暴自棄。自甘陸沈。為下劣愚癡之漢。若果是茫無所知。何不博問先知。凡遇五參。見曲杲床上老漢橫說豎說。何不歷在耳根。反覆尋思。畢竟是箇甚麼道理。山僧五歲出家。在上人侍下。見與賓客交談。便知有此事。便信得及。便學坐禪。十六為僧。十八行脚。在雙林遠和尚會下。打十方。從朝至暮不出戶庭。縱入眾寮。至後架。袖手當胸。不左右顧。目前所視不過三尺。初看無字。忽於念頭起處。打一箇返觀。這一念當下冰冷。直是澄澄湛湛不動不搖。過一日如彈指頃。都不聞鐘鼓之聲。十九在靈隱掛搭。見處州來書。說欽禪爾這工夫是死水。不濟事。動靜二相。打作兩橛。參禪須是起疑情。小疑小悟。大疑大悟。被州說得著。便改了話頭。看箇乾屎橛。一味東疑西疑。橫看豎看。却被昏散交攻。頃刻潔淨也不能得。移單過淨慈。結甲七箇兄弟坐禪。封被褥不沾席。外有修上座。每日在蒲團上。如箇鐵鑊子相似。地上行時開兩眼。垂兩臂。亦如箇鐵鑊子相似。要與親近說話。更不可得。因兩年不倒身。捱得昏困。遂一放都放了。兩月後。從前整頓得這一放。十分精神。元來要究明此事。不睡也不得。須是到中夜熟睡一覺。方有精神。一日廊下見修。方得親近。却問去年要與爾說話。只管避我。如何。修云。真正辦道人。無剪爪之工。更與爾說話在。因問。即今昏散打屏不去。修道爾自不猛烈。須是高著蒲團。豎起脊梁。盡渾身併作一箇話頭。更討甚昏散。依修做工夫。不覺身心俱忘。清清三晝夜。兩眼不交睫。第三日午後。在三門下。如坐而行。又撞見修。問爾在此做甚麼。答云辦道。修云。爾喚甚麼作道。遂不能對。轉加迷悶。即欲歸堂坐禪。又撞見首座道。爾但大開了眼。看是甚麼道理。又被提這一句。只欲歸堂。纔上蒲團。面前豁然一開。如地陷一般。是時呈似人不得。非世間一切相可喻。便下單尋修。修見便道且喜且喜。握手門前柳堤上行一轉。俯仰天地間。森羅萬象眼見耳聞。向來所厭。所棄之物。與無明煩惱。元來都是自己妙明。真性中流出。半月餘動相不生。可惜不遇大手眼尊宿。不合向這裏坐住。謂之見地不脫。礙正知見。每於睡著時。打作兩橛。公案有義路者。則理會得。如銀山鐵壁者。却又不曾。雖在無準先師會下。多年入室陞座。無一語打著心下事。經教語錄上。亦無一語可解此病。如是礙在胸中者十年。一日在天目佛殿上行。擡眼見一株古柏。觸目省發。向來所得境界。礙膺之物。撲然而散。如閻室中出在白日。從此不疑生。不疑死。不疑佛。不疑祖。始得見徑山老人立地處。好與三十拄杖。

6. 天目高峯妙禪師示眾

[1100c12] 此事只要當人的有切心。纔有切心。真疑便起。疑來疑去。不疑自疑。從朝至暮。粘頭綴尾。打成一片。撼亦不動。趁亦不去。昭昭靈靈。常現在前。此便是得力時也。更須確其正念。慎無二心。至於行不知行。坐不知坐。寒熱饑渴。悉皆不知。此境界現前。即是到家消息。也巴得搆。也撮得著。只待時刻而已。却不得見恁麼說。起一念精進心求之。又不得將心待之。又不得縱之棄之。但自堅凝正念。以悟為則。當此之時。有八萬四千魔軍。在汝六根門頭伺候。一切奇異善惡等事。隨汝心現。汝若瞥起毫釐著心。便墮他圈續。被他作主。受他指揮。口說魔話。身行魔事。般若正因。從茲永絕。菩提種子。不復生芽。但莫起心。如箇守屍鬼子。守來守去。疑團子焮然爆地一聲。管取驚天動地。某甲十五出家。二十更衣。入淨慈。立三年死限學禪。初參斷橋和尚。令參生從何來死從何去。意分兩路。心不歸一。後見雪巖和尚。教看無字。又令每日上來一轉。如人行路。日日要見工程。因見說得有序。後竟不問做處。一入門。便問。誰與爾拈這死屍來。聲未絕。便打出。次後徑山歸堂。夢中忽憶。萬法歸一。一歸何處。自此疑情頓發。直得東西不辨。南北不分。第六日隨眾閣上諷經。擡頭忽觀五祖演和尚真贊。末兩句云。百年三萬六千朝。返覆元來是這漢。日前拈死屍句子。驀然打破。直得魂飛膽喪。絕後再甦。何啻放下百二十斤擔子。其時正二十四歲。滿三年限。次後被問日間浩浩作得主麼。答曰作得。又問。睡夢中作得主麼。答云作得。又問。正睡著無夢時。主在何處。於此無言可對。無理可伸。和尚囑云。從今不要爾學佛學法窮古窮今。只饑來吃飯。困來打眠。纔眠覺來。抖擻精神。我這一覺。主人公畢竟在甚麼處。安身立命。自誓[拚-ム+去]一生。做箇癡獃漢。定要見這一著子明白。經及五年。一日睡覺正疑此事。忽同宿道友。推枕子落地作聲。驀然打破疑團。如在網羅中跳出。所有佛祖誦訛公案。古今差別因緣。無不了了。自此安邦定國。天下太平一念無為。十方坐斷。

[1101a23] 評曰。前示眾。做工夫一段。至為切要。學者宜書諸紳。其自敘中所云。饑來吃飯困來打眠。是發明以後事。莫錯過好。

7. 鐵山瓊禪師普說

[1101a27] 山僧十三歲。知有佛法。十八出家。二十二為僧。先到石霜。記得祥菴主教時時觀見鼻頭白。遂得清淨。後有僧。自雪巖來。寫得巖坐禪箴看。我做工夫却不曾從這裏過。因到雪巖。依彼所說做工夫。單提無字。至第四夜通身汗流。十分清爽繼得歸堂。不與人說話。專一坐禪。後見妙高峯。教十二時中莫令有間。四更起來。便摸索話頭。頓在面前。略覺困睡。便起身下地。也是話頭。行時步步不離話頭。開單展鉢。拈匙放箸。隨眾等事。總不離話頭。日間夜間。亦復如是。打成片段。未有不發明者。依峯開示。做工夫。果得成片。三月二十日。巖上堂云。兄弟家久在蒲團上瞌睡。須下地走一遭。冷水盥嗽。洗開兩眼。再上蒲團。豎起春梁。壁立萬仞。單提話頭。如是用功。七日決定悟去。此是山僧四十年前已用之工。某即依彼所說。便覺工夫異常。第二日。兩眼欲閉而不能閉。第三日。此身如在虛空中行。第四日。曾不知有世間事。其夜倚欄杆少立。泯然無知。檢點話頭。又不打失。轉身上蒲團。忽覺。從頭至足。如劈破髑髏相似。如萬丈井底被提在空中相似。此時無著歡喜處。舉似巖。巖云未在。更去做工夫。求得法語。末後云。紹隆佛祖向上事。腦後依前欠一槌。心下道。如何又欠一槌。不信此語。又似有疑。終不能決。每日堆堆坐禪。將及半載。一日因頭痛煎藥。遇覺赤鼻。問那吒太子拆骨還父拆肉還母話。記得被悟知客問。不能對。忽然打破這疑團。後到蒙山。山問參禪。到甚麼處是畢工處。遂不知頭。山教再做定力工夫。洗盪塵習。每遇入室下語。只道欠在。一日晡時坐至更盡。以定力挨拶。直造幽微。出定見山說此境已。山問。那箇是爾本來面目。正欲下語。山便閉門。自此工夫日有妙處。蓋以離巖太早。不曾做得細密工夫。幸遇本色宗匠。乃得到此。元來工夫做。得緊峭則時時有悟入。步步有剝落。一日見壁上三祖信心銘云。歸根得旨。隨照失宗。又剝了一層。山云。箇事如剝珠相似。愈剝愈光。愈明愈淨。剝一剝。勝他幾生工夫也。但下語猶只道欠在。一日定中。忽觸著欠字。身心豁然。徹骨徹髓。如積雪卒然開霽。忍俊不禁。跳下地來。擒住山云。我欠少箇甚麼。山打三掌。某禮三拜。山云。鉄山這一著子幾年。今日方了。暫時話頭不在。如同死人。一切境界逼迫臨身。但將話頭。與之抵當。時時檢點話頭。動中靜中。得力不得力。又定中不可忘却話頭。忘話頭則成邪定。不得將心待悟。不得文字上取解會。不得些少覺觸以為了事。但教如癡如呆去。佛法世法打成一片。施為舉措只是尋常。惟改舊時行履處。古云。大道從來不屬言。擬談玄妙。隔天淵。直須能所俱忘却。始可饑飢困則眠。

8. 師子峯天如則禪師普說

[1102a24] 生不知來處。謂之生大。死不知去處。謂之死大。臘月三十日到來。只落得手忙脚亂。何況前路茫茫。隨業受報。正是要緊事在。這箇是生死報境。若論生死業根。即今一念隨聲逐色。使得七顛八倒者便是。由是佛祖。運大慈悲。或教爾參禪。或教爾念佛。令汝掃除妄念。認取本來面目。做箇洒洒落落大解脫漢。而今不獲靈驗者。有三種病。第一不遇真善知識指示。第二不能痛將生死大事為念。悠悠漾漾。不覺打在無事甲裏。第三於世間虛名浮利。照不破。放不下。妄緣惡習上坐不斷。擺不脫。境風扇動處。不覺和身輟入業海中。東飄西泊去。真正道流。豈肯恁麼。當信祖師道。雜念紛飛。如何下手。一箇話頭。如鐵掃帚。轉掃轉多。轉多轉掃。掃不得。[拚-ム+云]命掃。忽然掃破太虛空。萬別千差一路通。諸禪德。努力今生須了却。莫教永劫受餘殃。又有自疑念佛與參禪不同。不知參禪只圖識心見性。念佛者悟自性彌陀唯心淨土。豈有二理。經云。憶佛念佛現前當來。必定見佛。既曰現前見佛。則與參禪悟道有何異哉。答或問云。但將阿彌陀佛四字。做箇話頭。二六時中。直下提撕。至於一念不生。不涉階梯。徑超佛地。

9. 汝州香山無聞聰禪師普說

[1102b26] 山僧初見獨翁和尚。令參不是心不是佛不是物。後同雲峯月山等六人。立願互相究竟。次見淮西教無能。令提無字。次到長蘆。結伴煉磨。後遇淮上敬兄。問云。爾六七年有甚見地。某答。每日只是心下無一物。敬云。爾這一絡索甚處出來。某心裏似知不知。不敢開口。敬見我做處無省發。乃云。爾定中工夫不失動處便失。某被說著。心驚便問。畢竟明此大事。應作麼生。敬云。爾不聞川老子道。要知端的意。北斗面南看。說了便去。某被一問直得。行不知行。坐不知坐。五七日間。不提無字。倒只看要知端的意。北斗面南看。忽到淨頭寮。在一木上。與眾同坐。只是疑情不解。有飯食頃。頓覺心中空亮輕清。見情想破裂。如剝皮相似。目前人物。一切不見。猶如虛空。半昧省來。通身汗流。便悟得北斗面南看。遂見敬下語作頌。都無滯礙。尚有向上一路。不得洒落。後入香巖山中過夏。被蚊子咬兩手不。定。因念古人為法忘軀。何怖蚊子。盡情放下咬定牙關。捏定拳頭。單提無字。忍之又忍。不覺身心歸寂。如一座屋倒却四壁。體若虛空。無一物可當情。辰時一坐。未時出定。自知佛法不誤人。自是工夫不到。然雖見解明白。尚有微細隱密妄想未盡。又入光州山中。習定六年。陸安山中又住六年。光州山中又住三年。方得顛脫。

[1102c23] 評曰。古人如是勤辛。如是久遠方得相應。今人以聰明情量。剎那領會。而猶欲自附於頓悟。豈不謬哉。

10. 般若和尚示眾

[1103a01] 兄弟家。三年五年做工夫。無箇入處。將從前話頭拋却。不知行到中途而廢。可惜前來許多心機。有志之士。看眾中柴乾水便僧堂溫暖。發願三年不出門。決定有箇受用。有等纔做工夫。心地清淨。但見境物現前。便成四句。將謂是大了當人。口快舌便。誤了一生。三寸氣消。將何保任。佛子。若欲出離。參須直參。悟須實悟。或話頭綿密無有間斷。不知有身。謂之人忘法未忘。有到此忘其本身。忽然記得。如在夢中跌下萬仞洪崖。只顧救命遂成風癩。到此須是緊提話頭。忽然連話頭。都忘謂之人法雙忘。驀地冷灰豆爆。始知張公吃酒。李公醉。正好來般若門下吃棒。何以故。更須打破諸祖重關。遍參知識。得知一切淺深。却向水邊林下。保養聖胎。直待龍天推出。方可出來扶揚宗教。普度群生。

11. 仰山古梅友禪師示眾

[1103a22] 須要發勇猛心。立決定志。將平生悟得的學得的。一切佛法四六文章語言三昧。一掃掃向大洋海裏去。更莫舉著。把八萬四千微細念頭。一坐坐斷。却將本參話頭。一提提起疑來疑去。撈來撈去。凝定身心。討箇分曉。以悟為則。不可向公案上卜度經書上尋覓。直須卒地斷爆地拆方始到家。若是話頭提不起連舉三遍。便覺有力。若身力疲倦。心識恹恹。却輕輕下地。打一轉再上蒲團。將本參話。如前挨撈。若纔上蒲團。便打磕睡。開得眼來。胡思亂想。轉身下地。三三兩兩。交頭接耳。大語細話。記取一肚皮語錄經書。逞能舌辨。如此用心。臘月三十日到來。總用不著。

12. 大乘山普巖斷岸和尚示眾

[1103b22] 萬法歸一。一歸何處。不得不看話頭。守空靜而坐。不得念話頭。無疑而坐。如有昏散。不用起念排遣。快便舉起話頭。抖擻身心。猛著精采。更不然下地經行。覺昏散去。再上蒲團。忽爾不舉自舉。不疑自疑。行不知行。坐不知坐。惟有參情。孤孤迥迥。歷歷明明。是名斷煩惱處。亦名我喪處。雖然如是。未為究竟。再加鞭策。看箇一歸何處。到這裏提撕話頭。無節次了也。惟有疑情。忘即舉之。直至返照心盡。是名法亡。始到無心處也。莫是究竟麼。古云。莫謂無心云是道。無心猶隔一重關。忽地遇聲遇色。磕著撞著。大咲一聲。轉身過來。便好。道懷州牛吃禾。益州馬腹脹。

13. 古拙禪師示眾

[1103c07] 諸大德何不起大精進。對三寶前深發重願。若生死不明。祖關不透。誓不下山。向長連床上七尺單前。高掛鉢囊。壁立千仞。盡此一生。做教散去。若辦此心。決不相賺。如其發心不真。志不猛勵。這邊經冬。那邊過夏。今日進前。明日退後。久久摸索不著。便道般若無靈驗。却向外邊。記一肚。抄一部。如臭糟瓶相似。聞者未免惡心嘔吐。直做到彌勒下生。有何干涉。苦哉。

14. 楚石琦禪師示眾

[1103c20] 兄弟。開口便道。我是禪和。及問他如何是禪。便東覷西覷。口如扁擔相似。苦哉屈哉。喫著佛祖飯。不去理會本分事。爭持文言俗句。高聲大語。略無忌憚。全不識羞。有般底不去蒲團上。究明父母未生以前本來面目。冷地裏學客春。指望求福。懺除業障。與道太遠在。凝心斂念。攝事歸空。念想纔生。即便遏捺。如此見解。即是落空亡的。外道魂不返的死人。又有妄認能嗔能喜能見能聞。認得明白了。便是一生參學事畢。我且問爾。無常到時。燒作一堆灰。這能嗔能喜能見能聞的。什麼處去也。恁麼參的是藥汞銀禪。此銀非真。一煨便流。因問爾。尋常參箇什麼。答道。有教參萬法歸一一歸何處。又教我只如此會。今日方知。不是。就和尚請箇話頭。我道古人公案。有什麼不是。汝眼本正。因師故邪。累請不已。向道去。參狗子無佛性話。忽然打破漆桶。却來山僧手裏。喫棒。

[1104a09] 評曰。天如而下。皆元末及 國初尊宿。若傑峯古拙楚石。則身經二代者也。楚石為妙喜五世孫。而其見地如日光月明。機辨如雷烈風迅。直截根原。脫落枝葉。真無愧妙喜老人矣。天如以至今日。無四休者。獨其語皆提持向上極則事。教初學人做工夫處絕少。僅得一二錄。如左。

15. 高麗普濟禪師答李相國書

[1104a17] 既曾於無字話提撕。不必改參也。況舉起別話頭時。曾參無字。必於無字。有小熟因地。切莫移動。切莫改參。但於二六時中四威儀內。舉起話頭。莫待幾時悟不悟。亦莫管有滋味無滋味。亦莫管得力不得力。撈到心思不及意慮不行。即是諸佛諸祖放身命處。

[1104a23] 評曰。此語錄萬曆丁酉。福建許元真東征。得之朝鮮者。中國未有也。因錄其要。而識之。

16. 楚山琦禪師解制

[1104a27] 諸大德九十日中。還曾證悟也無。如其未悟。則此一冬。又是虛喪了也。若是本色道流。以十方法界為箇圓覺期。莫論長期短期。百日千日。結制解制。但以舉起話頭為始。若一年不悟。參一年。十年不悟。參十年。二十年不悟。參二十年。盡平生不悟。決定不移此志。直須要見箇真實究竟處。方是放參之日也。如未能言前契旨。但將一句阿彌陀佛。置之懷抱。默默體究。常時鞭起疑情。這念佛的是誰。念念相續。心心無間。如人行路到水窮山盡處。自然有箇轉身的道理。[口@力]地一聲。契入心體。

[1104b11] 評曰。舉起話頭為進期。真實究竟為出期。當牢記取。

17. 天真毒峯善禪師示眾

[1104b14] 果欲了脫生死。先須發大信心。立弘誓願。若不打破所參公案。洞見父母未生前面目。坐斷微細現行生死。誓不放捨本參話頭。遠離真善知識。貪逐名利。若故違此願。當墮惡道。發此大願。防護其心。方堪領受公案。或看無字。要緊在因甚狗子無佛性上著力。或看萬法歸一。要緊在一歸何處。

或參究念佛。要緊在念佛的是誰。回光返照深入疑情。若話頭不得力。還提前文。以至末句。使首尾一貫方有頭緒。可致疑也。疑情不斷。切切用心。不覺舉步翻身。打箇懸空筋斗。却再來吃棒。

18. 空谷隆禪師示眾

[1104b26] 不可呆蠢蠢地念箇話頭。亦不可推詳計較。但時中憤然要明此事。忽爾懸崖撒手。打箇翻身。方見孤明歷歷。到此不可耽著。還有腦後一槌。極是難透。爾且恁麼參去○不參自悟。上古或有之。自餘未有不從力參而得悟者○優曇和尚。令提念佛的是誰。汝今不必用此等法。只平常念去。但念不忘。忽然觸境。遇緣。打著轉身一句。始知寂光淨土不離此處。阿彌陀佛不越自心。

[1104c06] 評曰。但時中憤然要明此事。此句甚妙。該攝看話頭之法。曲盡。

19. 天奇和尚示眾

[1104c09] 汝等從今發決定心。晝三夜三。舉定本參。看他是箇甚麼道理。務要討箇分曉。日久歲深。不煉昏沈。昏沈自退。不除散亂。散亂自絕。純一無雜。心念不生。忽然會得。如夢而醒。覆看從前。俱是虛幻當體本來現成萬象森羅全機獨露。於這大明國裏。也不枉為人。向此法門。也不枉為僧。却來隨緣度日。豈不暢哉。豈不快哉○終日念佛。不知全是佛念。如不知。須看箇念佛的是誰。眼就看定。心就舉定。務要討箇下落。

[1104c19] 評曰。毒峯天奇。皆教參究念佛。空谷何故謂。不必用此等法。蓋是隨機不同。任便無礙。

20. 古音琴禪師示眾

[1104c23] 坐中所見善惡。皆由坐時。不起觀察。不正思惟。但只瞑目靜坐。心不精采。意順境流。半夢半醒。或貪著靜境。為樂致見種種境界。夫正因做工夫者。當睡便睡一覺。一醒便起。抖擻精神。挪揀眼目。咬住牙根。捏緊拳頭。直看話頭落在何處。切莫隨昏隨沈。絲毫外境不可采著○行住坐臥之中。一句彌陀莫斷。須信因深果深。直教不念自念。若能念念不空。管取念成一片。當念認得。念人彌陀與我同現。